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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - SECRETARY RICE TO MIDDLE EAST
IRAN ELECTIONS EU ISSUES - EU SUMMIT
PARIS - MONDAY, JUNE 20, 2005

A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

1. SECRETARY RICE TO MIDDLE EAST
2. IRAN ELECTIONS
3. EU ISSUES - EU SUMMIT

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

THE RISING PRICE OF OIL AND THE FAILED EUROPEAN SUMMIT ARE TWO OF TODAY'S MAJOR FRONT-PAGE STORIES. FOR LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE "THE EU-25 'FREEZE' THE EU CONSTITUTION;" LIBERATION HEADLINES "THE EU KO STANDING;" AND LA CROIX "THE EUROPEANS IN SEARCH OF A SECOND WIND." COMMENTARIES ABOUND ON THE FAILED EU BUDGET AND COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY, WITH LE MONDE WRITING ABOUT "TWO FAILURES" WHICH ARE TURNING INTO "BLAIR'S TWO VICTORIES." (SEE PART C) IN A COMMENTARY IN LE FIGARO THE BLAIR-CHIRAC ANIMOSITY IS ANALYZED, EVEN IF COMMENTATOR PHILIPPE GUILLAUD WRITES: "BLAIR DID NOT MANAGE TO SPLIT THE CHIRAC-SHROEDER TANDEM. AND JUNKER MADE VERY HARSH REMARKS AGAINST BLAIR. NOW THAT THE PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN BLAIR AND CHIRAC HAVE REACHED A GLACIAL ERA, BLAIR WILL BENEFIT FROM PRESIDENT BUSH'S AID AT THE NEXT G8 SUMMIT FROM JULY 6 TO 8." LE FIGARO CARRIES AN OP-ED BY BENITA FERRERO-WALDNER, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS, ON EUROPE'S POLITICAL ROLE ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE. (SEE PART C)

A POLL FOR LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE SHOWS THAT PRESIDENT CHIRAC CONTINUES TO FALL IN POPULARITY, WITH ONLY 28 OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORTING HIS POLICIES. THE COMMENTARY READS: "THE BAROMETER SHOWS THE OPPOSITE OF A POLL OF FEELINGS TRIGGERED BY A SPECIFIC EVENT OR ANNOUNCEMENT. IT REFLECTS A DEEPLY GROUNDED POPULAR TREND."

LE JOURNAL DU DIMANCHE ALSO CARRIES A REPORT ALLEGING THAT FRENCH HOSTAGE FLORENCE AUBENAS WAS LIBERATED FROM IRAQI CAPTORS FOLLOWING PAYMENT OF A 15 MILLION DOLLAR RANSOM. THE PAPER'S INFORMATION IS ALLEGEDLY CORROBORATED BY ROBERT MENARD, PRESIDENT OF JOURNALISTS WITHOUT BORDERS." GILLES DELAFON REPORTS THAT THE FRENCH AUTHORITIES HAVE DENIED PAYING A RANSOM, "BUT WERE NOT CONVINCING."

IN INTERNATIONAL NEWS SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT TO THE MIDDLE EAST IS FACTUALLY REPORTED WITH LIGHT COMMENTARY, WHILE THE ELECTIONS IN IRAN ARE WIDELY COMMENTED. (SEE PART C)

WITH THE PARIS AIR SHOW HAVING CLOSED ITS DOORS ON SUNDAY, THE LATEST FIGURES INDICATE THAT AIRBUS IS IN THE LEAD WITH 280 REGISTERED ORDERS 146 FOR BOEING. A RELATED ARTICLE IN LE FIGARO ECONOMIE REPORTS: "THE AEROSPACE INDUSTRY IS WORRIED ABOUT AN 'ANTI-AIRBUS' TREND IN AMERICAN POLITICAL CIRCLES. MANY ARE THOSE WHO FEEL THAT THE ANTI-AIRBUS AMENDMENT WILL KEEP AIRBUS FROM PARTICIPATING IN THE PENTAGON'S BID FOR TANKER AIRCRAFT. THE FEELING IN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC IS GENERALLY ANTI-EUROPEAN AND EVEN ANTI-FRENCH. BUT THE 'ANTI-AIRBUS' BILL WILL BE FACING SENATOR MCCAIN WHO IS EAGER TO CHANGE HOW BOEING DOES THINGS. IN HIS VIEW, THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURER MUST STOP FUNCTIONING IN A POSITION OF MONOPOLY, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO TANKER AIRCRAFT. MCCAIN IS TEMPTED TO USE AIRBUS TO SHAKE BOEING AND FORCE IT TO LOWER ITS PRICES."

LE FIGARO REPORTS A PARIS "COLLABORATIVE" MEETING BETWEEN U.S. AND FRENCH JUDICIAL REPRESENTATIVES ON THE HALLIBURTON CORRUPTION INVESTIGATION. THE PRESENCE IN PARIS LAST WEEK OF "A HIGH U.S. OFFICIAL," MARK MENDELSON, IS NOTED.

A POLL CONDUCTED SIMULTANEOUSLY IN THE U.S. AND FRANCE FOR LE MONDE SHOWS THAT "THE FRENCH AND THE AMERICANS HARBOR NEGATIVE VIEWS OF ONE ANOTHER. PUBLIC OPINION ON BOTH SIDES APPEARS TO BE LESS INCLINED TO DO AWAY WITH THE ACRIMONY THAT HAS DOMINATED THE FRANCO-AMERICAN DIALOGUE FOR THE PAST TWO YEARS. OBVIOUSLY WHAT IS TRUE OF DIPLOMACY IS NOT TRUE FOR PUBLIC OPINION."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

SECRETARY RICE TO MIDDLE EAST

SIPDIS

"A JARRING NOTE"

PATRICK SAINT-PAUL IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/20): "THE ISRAELI PRESS PRESENTED SECRETARY RICE'S VISIT AS A 'MAINTENANCE VISIT,' WITH THE SECRETARY TRAVELING TO ENCOURAGE BOTH SIDES. BUT SECRETARY RICE WAS TREATED TO A DISPIRITING DIGEST OF THE DIFFICULTIES THAT MUST BE OVERCOME."

"EGYPT, AN ESSENTIAL REGIONAL ALLY"

CLAUDE GUIBAL IN LEFT-OF-CENTER LIBERATION (06/20): "WHILE IN CAIRO, SECRETARY RICE WILL ENCOURAGE DEMOCRATIZATION AS SHE RAISES HER VOICE AGAINST REPRESSION. SHE WILL CONGRATULATE WITH ONE HAND, ALL THE WHILE USING THE STICK WITH THE OTHER. THESE PAST FEW MONTHS, RELATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND THE U.S. HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY CHAOTIC. A CRISIS THAT CULMINATED IN THE CANCELLATION OF SECRETARY RICE'S TRIP IN MARCH. JUST AS WASHINGTON EXPRESSED ITS DESIRE TO MAKE EGYPT A MODEL OF ITS POLICY OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. BUT WASHINGTON CANNOT AFFORD TO BE TOO CRITICAL OF EGYPT, WHICH IS PLAYING A ROLE IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATIONS. AND SO THE U.S. MUST ALL AT ONCE STAY ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF CAIRO EVEN AS IT RAISES ITS VOICE. A DOUBLE LANGUAGE THAT HAS ELICITED MUCH CRITICISM."

IRAN ELECTIONS

"IRAN'S CALL"

PIERRE ROUSSELIN IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/18): "THE IRANIANS ARE PROVING THEY HAVE LOST NONE OF THEIR ASPIRATIONS FOR CHANGE. THE ELECTIONS IN IRAN DO NOT CORRESPONDENT TO THE IDEA WE IN THE WEST HAVE OF A DEMOCRACY. PRESIDENT BUSH DID NOT FAIL TO RECALL THIS FACT SO THAT THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN IS NOT TAKEN AS THE MODEL OF DEMOCRATIZATION HE WANTS FOR THE 'GREATER MIDDLE EAST.' BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT MANY OF AMERICA'S ALLIES IN THE REGION, STARTING WITH PAKISTAN, COULD WELL FIND THEIR INSPIRATION IN IRAN'S ELECTION. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT IRAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS ARE USELESS. EVEN IF THE REFORMISTS ARE NO LONGER IN THE LEAD, THEY HAVE MADE THEIR MESSAGE HEARD AND THE REGIME, HOWEVER MUCH THEOCRATIC, WILL HAVE TO TAKE IT INTO ACCOUNT. IRANIANS HAVE FEW ILLUSIONS. POLITICAL FREEDOM WILL NOT HAPPEN OVERNIGHT. ASPIRATIONS FOR CHANGE CONCERN ESSENTIALLY THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND A DESIRE TO LOOK TO THE WEST. THE FAVORITE, RAFSANDJANI, WHO HAS CAMPAIGNED IN FAVOR OF A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE U.S., HAS NOTHING OF A REFORMIST. WHOEVER IT IS THAT SUCCEEDS KHATAMI, THE WEST WILL HAVE TO ANSWER IRAN'S CALL, ALL THE WHILE KEEPING FROM CONSOLIDATING THE MULLAH'S REGIME."

"BUSH'S ROLE"

GEORGES MALBRUNOT IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/20): "THE ATTACKS PRESIDENT BUSH MADE ON THE EVE OF THE IRANIAN ELECTIONS AGAINST 'A DEMOCRACY OF FAADE' MAY HAVE INCITED SOME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTIONS."

EU ISSUES - EU SUMMIT

"EUROPE, A PLAYER WITH A WORLDWIDE DIMENSION"

BENITA FERRER-WALDNER, EUROPEAN COMMISSIONER IN CHARGE OF FOREIGN RELATIONS IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (06/20): "TODAY'S EU-U.S. SUMMIT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THAT WHATEVER OUR INTERNAL DIFFERENCES, WE ARE MOVING TOWARDS SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE. THE SUMMIT'S AGENDA ALREADY PROVES THAT EUROPE IS FULLY ABLE TO HOLD ITS RANK ALONGSIDE THE U.S. THIS WEEK, THE EU AND THE U.S. WILL JOINTLY ORGANIZE AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IRAQ. THIS IS THE RESULT NOT OF A NEW TREATY BUT OF A RESOLUTE POLITICAL WILL. THE BRUSSELS CONFERENCE WILL PROVIDE THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT WITH THE SUPPORT IT NEEDS TO DEAL WITH THE CHALLENGES IT IS FACING. AS PART OF THE QUARTET, WE ARE HELPING THE ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS TO RESOLVE THEIR CONFLICT. OUR BIGGEST SUCCESS IN MATTERS OF FOREIGN POLICY IS PROBABLY WHAT THE EU EXPANSION HAS BROUGHT THE WORLD IN TERMS OF PEACE AND SECURITY ON THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT. IN THE EYES OF THE U.S., THIS PROBABLY REPRESENTS OUR MOST MARKED IMPACT ON INTERNATIONAL STABILITY AND PROSPERITY. TODAY WE ARE LAUNCHING A NEW TRANSATLANTIC INITIATIVE FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION AND GROWTH, MEANT TO STRENGTHEN TRADE AND INVESTMENT BETWEEN THE EU AND THE U.S. . OUR FOREIGN POLICY AROUND THE WORLD PROMOTES PEACE, PROSPERITY AND SECURITY. IN ALL SECTORS WE WORK HAND IN HAND WITH OUR AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVING OUR SHARED OBJECTIVES."

"BLAIR TAKES THE UPPER HAND"

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE IN ITS EDITORIAL (06/20): "THE DOUBLE FAILURE OF BRUSSELS, NEGOTIATING THE BRITISH 'REBATE' AND THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY, HAS RESULTED IN A DOUBLE VICTORY FOR BLAIR. HELPED BY HIS RECENT RE-ELECTION AND THE WEAKENED FRANCO-GERMAN COUPLE, BLAIR WAS ABLE TO IMPOSE HIS VIEWS. WITH TWO WEEKS TO GO BEFORE HE TAKES OVER AS PRESIDENT OF THE EU, BLAIR HAS TAKEN THE UPPER HAND. THE BRITISH PRIME MINISTER REJECTS THE NOTION THAT HIS INTENTION IS TO ERODE EUROPE'S SOCIAL MODEL, BUT THE FACT IS THAT HIS PROGRAM IS NOTHING MORE THAN A LIBERAL PROGRAM. EUROPE IS STALLED." WOLFF